The Seed Sower.

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Art, Human and Divine.

Thou who hast wrought thy soul into thine art,
Wedding eternal truth and beauty, great
Thy gift to me, expressing the innate
And formless yearnings of my musing heart.
Yet could'st thou unto me a sense impart,
Of that full argument whose precious freight,
Charged thy bright soul with impulse to create,
Joy far beyond my thought would in me start.
O! then if thus the art of man may bless—
Enfolding glories greater than we see:
Go! tread the flowery field in humbleness;
Go! feel the royal skies mute majesty.
Walk where earth's master artists aye have trod;
Go! learn to love the perfect art of God.

N. A.

After Night.

Up-springs the lark all boisterous, jubilant,
From out the yellow wheat, with vigorous flight,
Breasting the heaven's blue—his clear, shrill pipe,
With burst of music, sunrise welcoming,
And gladdening his brooding mate below.

Light lies the silver mist in filmy veil
On the pink cressets of the clover-buds,
Whose dew-tipped clusters feel not yet the warmth,
Of the new-risen sun.

A feathery web
Of fairy gossamer sits on the furze,
And with a maze of glistening tracery,
Of elfin cords, joins in a stately troop,
Of bristling helms, the downy thistle-tufts,
And veils the beadlets blue of blae berries,
That shelter 'neath the fern. The brambles show
Their black and scarlet store of ripening fruit
Adown the chalky hollows; and from copse
The sprightly rabbit with white-glinting tail,
Darts to the sweet and fragrant border-grass,
That skirts the winding path unto the stile.
Aurora, rosy-fingered goddess fair,
Turneth her white steeds homewards, in her track
Rolls up the golden car of glorious Day!

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Social Sincerity.

A SERMON BY REV. J. E. ODGERS, M.A.

ECCLESIASTICUS, v. 11—"Let thy life be sincere."

The book from which my text is taken is one of the most interesting remains of the later Jewish literature. It is the work of a conservative Palestinian Jew, at the beginning of the 2nd century B.C. The author, as the prologue tells us, "did imitate Solomon, and was no less famous for wisdom and learning." The book was written originally in Hebrew, and translated by the grandson of the writer, who bore the same name as himself, into Greek, in the year 132 B.C. This was done in Alexandria, probably; and the book thus translated into the language used by the Jews settled there, was, as Dean Stanley says, a recommendation of the theology of Palestine to Alexandria. Its publication then probably drew from the Greek-speaking Jews, already tinged with Greak speculation and Platonic philosophy, a reply, which we have in the work called "The Wisdom of Solomon," which is, conversely, the recommendation of the theology of Alexandria to Palestine.

The practical wisdom and shrewdness of observation which characterise this book are sufficiently seen in the chapter before us. A modest and yet self-respectful bearing in society and conversation could not be better described and enforced. But this little sentence, "and let thy life be sincere," is not found in many manuscripts, and it has been doubted whether it ought to stand in the text. I fancy the reason of the

suspicion attaching to it must be this:—It seems almost out of place where it stands; it goes deeper than the context; deeper than the connection seems to require. "Know your own mind, and consistently speak it," is the main precept. "When your mind is not made up, listen with care to all that bears upon the question in hand, but don't be ready to venture immature opinions." In the author's own words, "Be steadfast in thy understanding, and let thy word be the same. Be swift to hear (and let thy life be sincere), and with patience give answer. If thou hast understanding, answer thy neighbour; if not, lay thy hand upon thy mouth." Now, here I can imagine that the author was going to say—"Be swift to hear, and sincere in *your speech*"—but that the idea struck him that sincerity in *speech* was really nothing by itself; sincerity must be all in all, or not at all. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Only *a life* which, like the speech he has been commending, is steadfast and the same throughout, can furnish the truthful and consistent word. If your speech is to represent your meaning; if it is not to be disturbed by eagerness to make a favourable impression upon the listener; if it is not to be the futile attempt to be equal with others in conversation when you really have nothing to say; or if, on the other hand, your words are not to display impatience of differences of opinion, or discourteous indifference to things which are of interest to others—it must be the outcome of a regulated system in your inner life, the parts of which are accustomed to work faithfully together—the *mind* to know itself, to respect its own tried and legitimate convictions, to be fully aware of its own shortcomings and ignorances—the *heart* to regard conviction in others with respect, and to combine the earnest service of truth with that Christian charity which is slow to attribute wilful error to those who conscientiously oppose it—the *speech*, to faithfully reflect the conclusions of intellect rather than to give currency to borrowed or hastily formed opinion—to call things by their right names, and not to call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet—to testify quietly and unobtrusively to the verdicts of the mental and moral judgment, and at the same time to avoid the unkindness of sarcasm, or the light triumph of superiority in word-fencing. Yes, the sincere speech can only reflect what is behind it. Sincerity is destroyed directly the speech is a bit *better* or a bit *worse* than the life within. Like the hands upon the clock's dial plate, it not only tells a story, true or untrue, of time as it goes on; it tells at the same time its story of the accurate or inaccurate fitting, the steady or unsteady working, of wheels within wheels behind it. The son of Sirach is right. "Let thy speech be sincere," would have been scarcely half a precept. "Let thy *life* be sincere," goes straight to the mark.

Now I think there is a mistaken conception abroad as to *sincerity of speech*, which needs to be corrected by reflection as to the sincerity which goes throughout the whole life. People are sufficiently agreed in condemning in public speech, or in private conversation, that which is merely plausible—that which is obviously intended to produce an impression favourable to some private end of the speaker's, or to give listeners the idea that he is either more learned, or more obliging, or more in agreement with them, than he really is. Public men are judged severely on this point; and this is natural, because their public conduct is a thing which is before the gaze of all, and may be compared with their political professions when we like. And in private society, too, we resent anything that looks like a taking advantage of social occasions to enlist a kind of popularity. The well-being and comfort of social circles depends upon an understanding of equality—an equal right to give and take in the interchange of talk or civility; liking or deference are not to be sought as ends in themselves. Honour will come where honour is due in the long run. People resent an unwarranted profusion of kindness, or a vast profession of interest in them, as they resent groundless conceit—and this is the form of *insincerity* which usually rises in their minds when they hear the word. They have in recollection instances in which elaborate expressions of sympathy sounded hollow; offers of help evaporated into mere words, and courtesies died away into mere forms, just when a kindly greeting or an out-stretched hand would have been a comfort and a support. And every now and then they say, "Let us have done with conventionalities which don't mean kindliness, and acquaintances that ape the language, but have nothing to do with the spirit, of friendship."

This is natural; but, on the other hand, some alarm is naturally felt at the *sincerity* which those who profess to be in revolt against a sham cordiality, or an artificial social behaviour, may be disposed to adopt or to advocate; for often, in the name of truthfulness, they would banish the usual forms of politeness, and in fear lest they themselves should be supposed to be more friendly than they are, they spread an air of discomfort and mistrust around them. Some seem inclined to perpetually test their own strength of mind by seeing whether they have courage to utter, in season or out of season, what they sometimes call "a few home truths;" while others test their friends' temper pretty severely in a variety of ways, apparently for no other purpose but to see whether their relation is *real friendship*, or only what they call *conventionality*. How much pitiless, merciless, heart-rending rudeness and insult has been poured forth with such preface as this:—"Now I am a plain man, and I speak my mind; and, as a friend, I must tell you ——" and so forth! It may be the crudest opinion or the merest prejudice, but you are to take it as the truth and the whole truth, simply because it is what you did not suppose that anybody with any natural kindliness of disposition, to say nothing of anyone claiming the sanction of friendship, would utter in your presence. Such instances dispose us to add to the Litany the poet's supplication—"Save, O save me, from a candid friend." And yet these good people are surprised that those who still hold them as friends should find pleasure in any other society; they wonder that those who can enjoy the advantage of their plain-speaking and free criticism should ever mix with those who are more reticent; and would make their own antipathies into laws for all their friends. They do not go into society themselves, they say; they rail against its shams and conventions and hollownesses—and marvel that people don't also leave this society and come to seek that friendship with which they honour a few, whom also, if they are permitted, they rule with a rod of iron. But all their talk of society as an institution, or a thing that you can alter by law, or preaching, or grumbling, is pure nonsense. I am not speaking of society in the abstract, or in the sociologist's sense, but of the people you and I know and live among. People who have interests or acquaintances in common, will naturally see each other and talk to each other from time to time. That is society as we know it. Its tone is not elevated; its judgments are not wise—no, but if those who could correct these things remain on pedestals at home, these things will not be corrected. This kind of *society* must not be supposed or allowed to supersede friendship. It is the medium through which the atoms, that may become attracted into friendship, are free to move in obedience to each other's attraction, and so find each other out; and the *social temper* developed in it is a thing, and a good thing, in itself. It is not friendship, and it ought not to be vilified because it is not what it must never profess to be. It is merely silly to talk about "conventional shams" and "mockery of friendship" when people are quite content to find pleasure for the time in free interchange of opinion, in conversation on topics found at the moment to be of common interest—and experience some slight sense of change and refreshment in meeting new faces and hearing new voices. Of course the confidences of intimate friendship are not for the many; but if a man will consort with none but his intimate friends, he is apt to live in a close atmosphere, where opinion is prone to become prejudice, and unanimity to harden into an egotism of three. But there are few friendships more valuable than those which spontaneously grow out of affinities discovered, we cannot tell how, in the free air of a pretty general and pretty mixed society, where there is nothing but liking—not accident of relationship, neighbourhood, or business connection—to foster their growth. The wider the social area across which such friendships stretch, the more useful they are; for sympathy, combined with difference of view, or a different method of approaching a subject, is a great mental and moral help and stimulus.

But this much I must grant to those who unfavourably contrast the tone and habits of social intercourse with the realities of friendship, that there may be people foolish enough to mistake the one for the other; and there certainly are people who have what I have called the *social temper* in a high degree, who seem, *in consequence*, not only not to feel the need of intimate friendships, but even to be *disqualified* for forming and maintaining them.

They are people who like to have others about them, who are always glad to see old acquaintances, always glad, too, to see new ones. They do take a kindly interest in you when they see you; but you must not suppose that your absence has caused them much sorrow of heart. Their interest wanes and springs again; you are always sure of a welcome, but you must not misinterpret it. They like to see others comfortable, but have no idea of binding people to them by eternal obligations. They will do all they can for you while you are at hand, but you must not appeal to any abiding thoughtfulness for you, or you will be bitterly disappointed. And without any consciousness of the fact, these good folks *do* bitterly disappoint many who thought they were their *friends*. *That* was the mistake. As a rule, alas! they have no friends. They have been frightened and made uneasy at discovering now and then that their sociability has betrayed others into unsought confidences—that appeals are made to them for a sympathetic thoughtfulness which they have not in them to bestow. They nervously decline the care another would put upon them, or if they are harried into assuming it, they do not bear it for him, in whole or in part, but let it drop as quickly as they may. They are not consciously insincere; but just as an external wit may cover no lightness of heart; just as a smart argumentativeness may cover no power of independent thought or logical reasoning, so with them, kindly words—aye, and kindly thoughts and kindly deeds—which are many, cover no heart-power of sustained sympathy, thoughtfulness, and patience for others. They have not wanted to go below the surface, and they have not gone; they have sought intercourse with their fellows only, or chiefly, as a means of *pleasure*; there was no harm in that, but if they have throughout found nothing more—no enrichment of mind or deepening of heart—then they themselves are much more to be pitied than those whose expectations they disappoint.

I believe it is when a man's life has no depth, when he has least self-knowledge, and little in himself that is worth the knowing, that he is either most dependent upon society or most disappointed in it. A man who has some power of living from his own centre, who knows his own mind, and has that personal sincerity from which, I take it, modesty must be inseparable, will not be exorbitant in his expectations of what others can do for him, or prone to judge them as falling short of demands which he has a right to make. He will generally be the last to insist upon propounding, on casual occasions, his own serious views of things, and the last to complain that others are not serious enough. But still there is at least one thing of which he has a right to complain—one social convention, which I feel bound (in spite of my general defence of society) to denounce. It is, that a different tone and manner is used in talking of a subject before *several* people from that which would be used in conversing upon it with any one of them separately. The best talkers often set the worst example in this matter. I suppose it is not unusual for one of such to be spoken to quietly apart by a listener with such words as "You were talking just now about so-and-so; now I should be very glad to know what you *really* think about it." I suppose he is flattered by such a remark, but he ought not to be; it seems to be a kind of convention that in a company above the number of three, you may speak of things as they are not, and in a tone which you know not to be genuine, but affected; that people are to be surprised if you are serious, and in a general way to take for granted that you are not. Now, I am not decrying wit or humour; I am only denouncing the mistake of supposing that levity is nearly as good, and will do as well. I do not mean that one man is to be suffered to inflict a monologue, or two a dialogue, upon a whole table, just because they happen to be interested in this or that; but I maintain that the whole tone of our society is lowered, the uses of our social occasions are impaired, while the man who has special knowledge or deep interest in a subject or a cause must silently suffer it to be made mere occasion for jest (or run the risk of seeming to over-step the law of social fitness if he ventures to demur). I protest against the assumption that it is not good form for a man to speak seriously about matters on which he feels seriously. A theory that we snap off current interests, put off all serious things till to-morrow, and are ready for anything or nothing—a thing which might be applicable once a year, to a Christmas party or a mid-summer pic-nic—is obviously ridiculous when applied to ordinary

social occasions. We cannot turn ourselves upside down every time we enter a friend's house. And we need sometimes a little quiet, unobtrusive protest that a man does not work at a thing all day to laugh at it in the evening; and that moral distinctions are really just the same after dinner as they were before.

Let your life be sincere. Seldom, I think, has the ordinary life of England been so nearly sincere as at present; never was there more real and serious purpose, or more intelligent interest, than there is now, especially in the young. Seldom has the sway of fashion extended so far, while causing so little damage to the inner fibre of life. Let us for shame cease to lend ourselves to representations of the world as more worldly than it is; of ourselves as more frivolous than we are.

"And play no tricks upon thy soul, O man,
Let fact be fact, and life the thing it can."

Heartsease.

The sun hung low, the stream ran slow,
With amber glory the West was aglow,
The aspen tops were still, so still!
The air was bland with the balmy musk
Of roses. Out from the verdant dusk
Of tangled boughs the earliest trill
Of the amorous night-bird sweetly shook;
And, ah, the brook, the shy, shy brook,
That steals by that garden under the hill!

Slipt there one from out the shade,
By a towering cedar made;
Clad in robe of filmy white,
Fair of form, of footstep light,
Flitting like a fawn.
Came a cry of gentle greeting,
Ah! my heart, the happy meeting
There upon the shadowed lawn.
Soft the cheek and warm the tress,
Subtly sweet the shy caress;
Dear the words that fall, love-laden,
Murmuringly from meeting lips;
'Tis a mystic language, only
Spoken one to one. Ah! lonely
He who in the ear of maiden
Never love's low babble slips!
Sickly-sweet? Cold cynic, no!
Sweet she is, as summer air,
Yet as pure as printless snow,
Earnest as her even-prayer.
Loveliness is hers, and she
Innocently joys thereat.
Love she knoweth, fervent, free,
Yet so pure a god that he
Leaves her not at heaven's gate.
Love to her is life and duty,
Not the god of gilded lust;
Well she knoweth Bacchant beauty
Is but painted dust.

Not sickly-sweet, nor fiery-foul,
Nor ice, nor frenzied flame is she;
Just a woman, pure of soul.
So he singeth—happy he
Who so rare a flower possesseth,
Who so fair a form caresseth!
Glad and grateful, fast yet free;
Free of fret, and free of fear,
Anger's thorn, or sorrow's tear,
Thrall to love and constancy.
Thus he singeth, while the trees
Shiver to the waking breeze;
Singeth low, though glad of heart,
Words that make the waters start
Into happy eyes that glisten,
As the music swells;
Bearing unto ears that listen
Such a tender tale as tells
All of love, and truth, and trust,
And the heart that hears unmoved,
Is a heart that hath not loved,
Or is dead as Pharaoh's dust.

SONG.

Pansy-eye'd, Madonna-browed,
Sits my love, awaiting me;
Jar and jangle of the crowd,
Fear and fret away shall flee
When her gentle smile I see.
Still as sleep of halcyon seas
Is the air about her; she,
As she singeth,
Ever bringeth
Heart's-ease! heart's-ease!

Some may praise the passion-flower,
Some may laud the ruddy rose;
My home-blossom hath a dower
Dearer than all wealth of those.
Passion's passing, Beauty's close
Are the first of time's decrees;
Faithful love no fading knows,
Ever liveth,
Ever giveth,
Heart's-ease! heart's-ease!

From doubt where all is double,
Where wise men are not strong;
Where comfort turns to trouble;
Where just men suffer wrong;
Where sorrow treads on joy;
Where sweet things soonest cloy;
Where faiths are built on dust;
Where love is half mistrust,
Hungry and barren and sharp as the sea;
Oh! set us free! —*Math. Arnold.*

Ruskin's "Seven Lamps of Architecture," considered as Parables.

III.—The Lamp of Power.

We have been told that "to be weak is to be miserable." Certainly there are few things more distressing, whether to the persons who suffer from it, or the persons who behold it, than weakness. Bodily weakness, mental weakness, weakness of will, weakness of nerve, weakness of character, these are among the saddest sights in human life. The one complaint that we have to make against so many men and women is that they have no strength of will and purpose, no moral backbone, no intellectual force, no depth of soul. All is fickle, nerveless, and boneless. Such people are the plague of life. On the other hand we all admire power. Even the villain is almost excused because he has at any rate some strength of character. Napoleon, Alva, Wallenstein—brutal, reckless, and false as they were, still fascinate us by their power. It was devastating power like the elemental forces of nature; the storms, the lightning, the tornado, the earthquake. But power of any kind has for the human mind a great attraction. It was James Watt who told George III. that he dealt in an article of which kings were said to be fond—Power. The one thing we wish to know is where power can be bought. People are greedy after money because they think money will secure them power, power to rule, power to be their own masters, power to be the masters of others, power to have their own way. That which urges many an ambitious man on to a political career is hope of power. Statesmen cling to office, not as is often said for the loaves and fishes, but for the power which office puts into their hands. Emerson has said that power is the first good of human life. Only by power he meant the inspiration of true and great thoughts, added to the strength of a great will. Life is a search after power.

Here is another suggestive sentence from Emerson which may lead us up to Ruskin:—"All power is of one kind—a sharing of the nature of the world. The mind that is parallel with the laws of nature will be in the current of events, and strong with their strength."

The elements of power in nature are symbols of the elements of power in man. Now one aim and object of architecture is to give the impression of power. Many buildings fail in true architectural effect because, while they are prettily designed and ornamented in good taste, they convey no impression of strength and massiveness. All is dwarfed and finicking; there is no breadth of effect, no concentration of thought, but the design is broken up into fragments, and power is the very last thing imagined or suggested. Such an instance in modern architecture you have in the new Law Courts of the Metropolis.

In his chapter on the Lamp of Power, Ruskin points out that the works of architecture fall into two broad classes, the one characterised by an extreme delicacy and refinement, to which we recur with a sense of affectionate admiration; the other, by a severe and serious majesty, which we remember with undiminished awe, like that felt at the presence and operation of some great spiritual power. In general terms, these two broad classes are spoken of as the beautiful and the sublime. Of course they run into one another, and there are all sorts of gradations and combinations between their two extremes. It is to the latter, to buildings which are marked by a certain serious majesty and having the impression of power, that Ruskin awards the palm. He goes on to point out in a very striking and subtle passage in what the difference between the two classes of buildings consists:—

> "It is not merely that which there is in nature between things beautiful and sublime; it is, also, the difference between what is derivative and original in man's work; for whatever is in architecture fair or beautiful, is imitated from natural forms; and what is not so derived, but depends for its dignity upon arrangement and government received from human mind, becomes the expression of the power of that mind, and receives a sublimity high in proportion to the power expressed. All building, therefore, shows man either as gathering or governing; and the secrets of his success are his knowing what to gather, and how to rule. These are the two great intellectual lamps of architecture; the one consisting in a just and humble veneration for the works of God upon the earth, and the other in an understanding of the dominion over those works which has been vested in man."

If you find that difficult to grasp, I may bring it home to you by an illustration drawn from the very church in which you are seated. The capitals of these pillars, with their

fine and delicate carving, convey a sense of beauty; the pillars themselves, built up of massive stones, convey a sense of power. That which is beautiful is so because it has been faithfully imitated from nature—the carving of leaf and flower and bird and reptile. But the columns themselves are not so much an imitation. There is nothing in nature exactly like them. They are original, and express the thought of feeling and power.

It is impossible for me in the short half-hour at my disposal even, to epitomise all that Ruskin has to say on the subject of power in this magnificent chapter. Suffice it now to notice how the three aspects of power in architecture on which he dwells are parables of the aspects and secrets of power in human life.

1. The sense of power in architecture is produced by a certain magnitude and simplicity, which is concerned more with breadth than with ornamentation; more with the building as a whole than with gilding, or painted windows, or fine carved work, or delicate traceries. There may not be much wealth of detail, but the mere mass of the building may give the idea of power. Even a bare wall, if it be massively built, well-proportioned, and topped with a frieze, may speak of power, and touch the soul with awe. Ruskin speaks much of buildings whose interest is in their walls.

"Of the many broad divisions under which architecture may be considered, none appear to me more significant than that into buildings whose interest is in their walls, and those whose interest is in the lines dividing their walls. In the Greek temple the wall is as nothing; the entire interest is in the detached columns and the frieze they bear; in French Flamboyant, and in our detestable Perpendicular, the object is to get rid of the wall surface, and keep the eye altogether on tracery of line; in Romanesque work and Egyptian, the wall is a confessed and honoured member, and the light is often allowed to fall on large areas of it, variously decorated. Now, both the principles are admitted by Nature, the one in her woods and thickets, and the other in her plains, and cliffs, and waters; but the latter is pre-eminently the principle of power, and, in some sense, of beauty also. For, whatever infinity of fair form there may be in the maze of the forest, there is a fairer, as I think, in the surface of the quiet lake; and I hardly know that association of shafts or tracery for which I would exchange the warm sleep of sunshine on smooth, broad, human-like front of marble. Nevertheless, if breadth is to be beautiful, its substance must in some sort be beautiful; and we must not hastily condemn the exclusive resting of the northern architects in divided lines, until at least we have remembered the difference between a blank surface of Caen stone, and one mixed from Genoa and Carrara, of serpentine with snow; but as regards abstract power and awfulness, there is no question; without breadth of surface it is in vain to seek them, and it matters little, so that the surface be wide, bold, and unbroken, whether it be of brick or of jasper; the light of heaven upon it, and the weight of earth in it, are all we need; for it is singular how forgetful the mind may become, both of material and workmanship, if only it have space enough over which to range, and to remind it, however feebly, of the joy that it has in contemplating the flatness and sweep of great plains and broad seas. And it is a noble thing for men to do this with their cut stone or moulded clay, and to make the face of a wall look infinite, and its edge against the sky like an horizon; or even if less than this be reached, it is still delightful to mark the play of passing light on its broad surface, and to see by how many artifices and gradations of tinting and shadow, time and storm will set their wild signatures upon it; and how in the rising or declining of the day the unbroken twilight rests long and luridly on its high, lineless forehead, and fades away untraceably down its tiers of confused and countless stone."

Now a powerful character has this simplicity and magnitude. There are many brilliant men who carry no weight, and exercise but little influence, for lack of simplicity. They say clever things, they can do much, they are eagerly sought after in company, but their character is not a whole, it is broken up into many attractive and startling features, wonderful bits of carving, all sorts of lights cut into it, flashing here and there, but a failure at last because it has no mass, no simple, broad features of strength. Look at that brilliant creature, Sheridan, and then look at Adam Bede. The one is like a fire-fly, a bird of paradise, a flashing diamond, all sparkle and vivacity; the other is like a bit of granite, a great rock on a mountain side, a veritable Alp, strong, majestic, yet with its rivulets of tenderness, and its hollows where ferns and flowers grow. It was said that Sheridan had native ability enough to rule the empire; but force of character is not due to intellectual ability, but to a certain large simplicity—simplicity of life, simplicity of purpose, simplicity of heart—things which always carry with them the sense of mass and magnitude. They do not dazzle the eye with their varied accomplishments, but the heart rests upon them as upon a source of strength that will not fail in time of need. They are marked by sincerity, integrity, loyalty, good faith; these indeed are the great stones with which their characters are built up into simple, stately temples.

2. Another element in the sense of architectural power is in the massiveness of the stones with which a building is erected. Even if a building be in itself small, it is in the architect's power to give it a certain dignity by building it of great stones, or at all events introducing such into its make. It is impossible that there should ever be majesty in a cottage built of brick, but there is a marked element of sublimity in the rude irregularities, the great boulders, the rocky walls of the mountain cottages of Wales, Cumberland, Scotland. The four or five great stones that reach from the ground to the eaves give a feeling of power and permanence which many larger buildings entirely want.

So in human character the sense of power arises from the presence of a few great thoughts, ideas, affections, or principles. Many men's minds absolutely swarm with little thoughts, among which there is not one that lifts itself up with any grandeur or in any sense rules the rest. They are like ants in an ant-hill, multitudinous and petty. No greatness of character is possible, no influences of power can proceed from a soul without the imperial sway of a few great ideas. Even one commanding thought, one noble conception, vividly realised and built into the character, is powerful in its rule and wide in its sway, giving dignity to the life however humble the lot. Let it be the idea of God, or of duty, or of country, or of the preciousness of the human soul; or even let it be some idea of worldly ambition, the resolution to win distinction, or attain a high post—almost any thought which rules and dominates and concentrates the whole of life on its issues gives power to life. But much more is this the case if the thought itself be noble, spiritual, worthy. Then, though a man be humble as a mountain cottage, which yet being built of the great stones of the mountain has a dignity and impressiveness of its own, he may have greatness of character as the result of a great idea dominating all his thoughts and works of days. So have I known lowly folk to whom the Bible has been their daily companion, until its great ideas have entered into the very substance of their being, endowing them with something of Eternal Power.

3. The third element of power in buildings is in the quantity and depth of their shadows. For the work of the builder requires that it should express

"a kind of sympathy by a measure of darkness as great as there is in human life, and that as the great poem and the great fiction generally affect us most by their masses of shade, and cannot take hold upon us if they affect a continuance of lyric sprightliness, but must be often serious and sometimes melancholy, else they do not express the truth of this wild world of ours. So there must be in this magnificently human art of architecture, some equivalent expression for the trouble and wrath of life, for its sorrow and its mystery; and this it can only give by depth in differences of shadows. I do not believe that ever any building was truly great unless it had mighty masses, vigorous and deep, and shadows mingled with its surface."

You may think this is a stronge doctrine. But look at literature. The literature that lives, that has entered into the heart of man, that dominates with power in human thought, is the literature in which the shadows are deep and mysterious. The book of Job, the Odyssey, Antigone, Œdipus—what works of power are these, dealing as they do with the tragedy of human life and sorrow and fate, with the darker passions and the deeper questionings of the soul. Look at Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth; look at Dante, Milton, and Goethe, and mark how all immortal works are immortal by reason of their faithful expression of the sorrow and mystery of life. There is sunshine in them too, wit and fancy, places of peace and rest; but they are what they are—the Himalayas of literature—on account of their passion of love and hate, their mysteries of inheritance and death; their tears, their scorn, their gloom, their majesty. To enter into them is to gain an access of elevation, to greaten the soul, to know the chastening and purifying influences of trouble and tragedy.

And here is that which gives power to human life, its possibility of feeling greatly. Storm and stress, temptation and trouble, hereditary bias, grief, bereavement, the night of sorrow, the shadow of death—he who is not moved by these things, whose heart they never grip with pain, is destitute of power. True it is, these things come to us all; yet we are not all men of power. No, because so many of us do not feel them deeply; we are frivolous and shallow; we put aside as quickly as possible all that is unpleasant; we think it philosophy to forget easily the griefs by which we are visited, knowing not that they are angels of God sent to teach us great things,

which we can never learn if we are in a hurry to be off to our pleasures.

"He that lacks time to mourn lacks time to mend."

To cultivate the stoicism which does *not* feel is not greatness. To cultivate the temper which throws off the burden of questioning thought or of dark trouble, as lightly as it throws off an unpleasant dream, this is not the secret of power. It is rather the cowardly weakness which dare not face the dark, or it is the imbecile frivolity to which all greatness is impossible. I know nothing more pitiable than calamity falling on a mind incapable of receiving its deep impressions; a mind that is the same afterwards as before such an awful experience; which can return to the same blind love, the same self-confident approval, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip over blighted human lives, the same feeble sense of relationship to the Eternal Their natures are not like stone into which the chisel cuts only to leave there some pattern of beauty in its lines and shadows, but rather like some soft, viscous substance which, whatever blows it receives, soon resumes the same smooth surface.

But he whom sorrow has not visited in vain; he who has known and conquered strong temptation; who has known bitter anguish, struggle, trust, triumph; who has learnt endurance; who has felt, suffered, and renounced; who has been chastened by humility into greater devotedness; who has been "battered by the shocks of doom into shape and use"—he it is whose soul gathers to itself something of the power of the star-lit skies and of the Eternal God.

Mistake it not, that power is not power over things. We have very little power over the circumstances in which we may be called by God to bear our part, but we have unlimited command over the temper of our souls. The strongest wills cannot order the events by which our spirits are to be perilled and tested. Powers quite beyond our reach—death, accident, another's sin, another's calamity—may change in a moment all the conditions of our life. With tomorrow's sun, existence may have new and awful aspects for us. We know nothing but that in all the disposition of things we are called upon to show an equal mind, the inexhaustible trust and hope of a spirit that will not be fretful even with sorrow, lest it should be fretful with that which adds a glory to the soul, and gives it new power to lift heavier burdens, and to sympathise with human trouble.

"We will not complain," says Carlyle, "of Dante's miseries; had all gone well with him, as he wished, Florence would have had another prosperous Lord Mayor, but the world would have lost the 'Divine Commedia.'" Shakespeare's works are full of sweetness and sunshine, but they are also full of deepest shadows. For Shakespeare, we know from his sonnets, suffered greatly. Tennyson's finest poem—"In Memoriam"—a poem which has had a more powerful effect on our age than anything else he wrote, was wrung out of a grief-stricken heart. It is a great lesson—no sorrow, no power!

JOSEPH WOOD.

True Religion.

Religion is associated in the minds of the young, the thoughtless, the uninitiated, with all that is gloomy, forbidding, and repulsive. It is regarded as a good theme for old men, the vigour of whose life is gone, or for sick men just ready to cross over Jordan. It will answer for the melancholy, but not for the mirthful. This is the popular idea of religion.

But this idea is false in every particular, and is contradicted both by the genius of religion itself and the testimony of all its professors. Religion forbids no pleasures that are not sinful; and pleasures that are sinful can do nobody any good, and nobody knows this better than the sinner himself. Some churches, we admit, have narrow views of these matters, and may be disposed to prohibit some amusements that are in themselves sinless. But religion itself interdicts nothing but sin. And the interdiction of sin would tend to the happiness of every human being. And a Christian ought to be the happiest, liveliest, and most jubilant of men. Those morose and sour professors who go with their heads bowed down like bulrushes, who are as afraid of a laugh as they would be of a pestilence, are not made so by religion; but by the lack of it. It is not its superabundance, but its deficiency, that develops such characters as these.

But a man whose peace is made with God can enjoy all that is innocent in the pleasures of life,

while his assurance of the life that is to come gives him a peace of mind, undisturbed by adverse circumstances, of which irreligious men know nothing. True religion is a cheerful, a hopeful thing. It presides as readily at the wedding as at the grave. It sanctifies and hallows all the relations and duties of life, and fits a man for whatever he has to do, to enjoy or to suffer. We do not believe in any creed of despair. We recommend religion to them because we seriously believe that it will teach them the way to live happily, as well as the way to die peacefully.

An Essay on Friends.

There is perhaps no word in our language more commonly used, or with less thought of its true meaning, than the word "friend." We constantly hear people speak of their friends when they mean only their acquaintances: a man says, "My friend so-and-so," when he intends to speak of somebody whom he has casually met, or with whom he dines now and then, or whom he sees at his club, or who stands to him in the loose relationship of business, or public life, or the courtesies of society. It would be very easy to make a long list of such classes of friends, and when made, and arranged in the Rabelaisian fashion, such a list would serve to indicate the commonly erroneous way in which the word is used, and to bring out clearly the fact that, in ordinary, modern phrase, "my friends" mean chiefly those with whom we have associations rather of multitude than of person. Here, for example, are a few specimens—the mere bones of a catalogue that might be indefinitely extended:

Political Friends.	Visiting Friends.
Religious Friends.	Family Friends.
Business Friends.	Personal Friends.
Parliamentary Friends.	College Friends.
Reverend Friends.	Professional Friends.
Learned Friends.	Travelling Friends.
Literary Friends.	Club Friends.

These classes — but a few of those which might be set down—exhibit the current idea of friendship, *i.e.* mere association, organised or accidental, enduring or casual. If we come to look at other ways of using the word, we find still more laughable illustrations of departure from its true meaning. It is not uncommon, for instance, to hear people speak of "false friends" and of "real friends," of "confidential friends" and of "friends whom we meet in society;" and so on, until there is no possible combination of the relations of life, however slightly held together, or no conceivable form of contradictory expression, which is not made somehow to confuse the idea of relationship which, strictly considered, is absolutely personal, individual, and exclusive. In modern life, indeed, when we speak of our friends, we often realise the fable of "The Hare and Many Friends;" we include half the world in the list; and find out, upon trial, that we have mistaken the word, and have not secured the thing.

Here, as in other matters, it is necessary to go down to the root to find out the real meaning of the word; and when we trace this word "friend" to its original, we find that it means "love"—the friend is a person whom we love, and who loves us, with a singular and perfect affection and confidence on both sides; with a trust without a flaw; with no trace of

> "The little rift within the lute
> That by and by will make the music mute,
> And ever widening slowly silence all."

It would be interesting and profitable, if one had time and space, to collect the views and estimates of friendship scattered through the works of notable writers, and to illustrate these by examples drawn from biography and history. But this requires a volume instead of an essay, and the labour of months instead of hours. Therefore we can do no more than present this view of friendship in little—offering the fruit of chance gleanings, and binding together the scattered ears of corn with mere discursive thought—musings, so to speak, as they happen to flit through the mind, and fall half idly from the pen. We take up, at random, a false notion of friendship—the view of a worldly philosopher, who painted his world as he saw it, and thought it represented all mankind. It is Rochefoucauld who speaks; and he says this: "What men have given the name of friendship to is nothing but an alliance, a reciprocal accommodation of interests, an exchange of good offices; in fact, it is nothing but a system of traffic, in which self-love always proposes to itself some advantage."

The baseness and untruthfulness of this view is illustrated by the saying of Horace Walpole: "If one of my friends happen to die, I drive down to St. James's coffee-house and bring home a new one!" One sees at a glance that the philosophers of the selfish school had no true idea of what constitutes a friend: in the one it is mere companionship in laborious idleness; in the other, the mere barter of one service for another—in both a hollow and insincere relation, proving, when tried, like the Dead Sea fruit: fair to the sight, dust and ashes, bitter to the taste within.

On the other hand, Shakespeare—great master of the human heart—sets the worth and value and the needfulness of a friend at their true level. Thus in the advice of Polonius to Laertes:

"The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy heart with hooks of steel."

Again, in *All's Well that Ends Well*, the counsel of the Countess of Rousillon to her son:

"Love all, trust a few;
Do wrong to none; be able for thine enemy,
Rather in power than use; and keep thy friend
Under thy own life's key."

Or in the passion of Hamlet's adjuration to his friend Horatio:

"I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of hearts,
As I do thee."

Once more, in the pathetic yearning of Timon, when the companions of his wealth—the gilded summer flies—desert him in his fall:

"All gone, and not one friend!"

For an admirable rendering of the true idea of friendship, turn to the book which is known as "The Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach:"

"Be in peace with many; nevertheless have but one counsellor of a thousand.

"If thou wouldst get a friend, prove him first, and be not hasty to credit him.

"For some man is a friend for his own occasion, and will not abide in the day of thy trouble.

"And there is a friend who, being turned to enmity and strife, will discover thy reproach.

"Again, some friend is a companion at the table, and will not continue in the day of thy affliction. But in thy prosperity he will be as thyself, and will be bold over thy servants. If thou be brought low, he will be against thee, and will hide himself from thy face.

"Separate thyself from thine enemies, and take heed of thy friends.

"A faithful friend is a strong defence; and he that hath found such a one hath found a treasure.

"Nothing doth countervail a faithful friend, and his excellency is invaluable.

"A faithful friend is the medicine of life; and they that fear the Lord shall find him. Whoso feareth the Lord shall direct his friendship aright; for as he is, so shall his neighbour be also."

Here, perhaps, may fitly be dropped in a little bundle of proverbs about friends and friendship—examples of many others of the same kind, similar in sentiment, alike in substance, in various languages and amongst nearly all nations:—

He's my friend that grindeth at my mill.
A friend in need is a friend indeed.
Prove thy friend 'ere thou have need.
All are not friends that speak us fair.
Friendship consists not in saying "What's the best news?"
Where shall a man have a worse friend than he brings home?
Friendship is not to be bought at a fair.
Friendship is stronger than kindred.
Friendship that flames goes out in a flash.

There is something very touching and beautiful in the view of friendship that makes it the union of two persons, to the exclusion of the rest of the world from the secret inner chamber. It is such a friendship as that of David and Jonathan: "Thy love to me was wonderful; passing the love of woman!" If a man have such a friend, how deeply he is bound to cherish him! We have seen what a wise man says on this head, in Shakespeare's counsel. Take now the words of a loving, tender-hearted poet, from George Herbert's "Church Porch":

"Thy friend put in thy bosom. Wear his eyes
Still in thy heart, that he may see what's there.
If cause require, thou art his sacrifice:
Thy drops of blood must pay down all his fear.
But love is lost, the way of friendship's gone,
Tho' David had his Jonathan, Christ his John."

Yet the mournful cadence is not true; "the way of friendship" is not gone. The heroic friendships existing in old times are to be found in ours. It is true that in the larger leisure of our fathers there was more time for sentiment; that friends were thrown more closely together; that intercourse was fuller; and that men poured out their hearts with greater amplitude in talk and in letters than they have time to do now. But the unbroken confidence and intimacy of

friends is as true and precious now as it ever was. Who is there amongst us who has not at least one true friend, at whose step the heart beats quicker, to whom we disclose our hopes and fears, whose kindly sympathy lightens our grief, whose encouragement nerves us to new effort, whose counsel guides us, on whose word and honour we can place unbroken trust—one, at least, of whom, in the language of that noblest modern tribute to friendship—the "In Memoriam"—we can say:

"Love is and was my Lord and King,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

"Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

"And hear at times a sentinel,
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well."

A Holiday Warning.

While the world was going at a sober jog-trot pace, it was only school children that had their regular holidays; now that we are accustomed, even in our ordinary avocations, to railway speed, we must all have something of a vacation, and, if possible a vacation ramble. It is an interesting and even a happy thought that the antidote often springs from the same source as the bane; it is in accordance with this provision, that the same agent that has made modern life so hurried, furnishes likewise so many new facilities for obtaining quiet and leisure. Steam, the great revolutionist of the nineteenth century, which has turned the life of so many into a perpetual whirl, as if relenting at the sight of its own hurry-scurry, has made it the easiest thing possible to get to the seaside, the lakes, the highlands, the islands, or wherever nature is calm, and quiet, and soothing. In numbers perpetually increasing, the well-to-do-classes are off from the bustle of the town to the quiet of the country, returning, it is to be hoped, with a new bloom on their cheeks, and a new vigour in nerve and brain and muscle. The hospitable and kind-hearted like to have their friends and their children's friends about them in this happy season of leisure; it is a time for the growth of friendship, and the easy play of all kindly feelings. A happy institution! a real boon from Him that knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust; coming down from above, like every good and perfect gift, and worthy surely of not less profound acknowledgment than that of the heathen poet—*Deus nobis hæc otia fecit.*

Yet, if care be not taken, the holiday puts all classes more or less out of gear; breaks in on regular family arrangements; disturbs the discipline of self-control; encourages something of a spirit of *abandon;* and undoes not a little of the effect of the regularity, the self-denial, the energy acquired in the season of work. How often is the Sunday school class wrecked because the teacher took no thought of how it was to be carried on in his absence for a holiday. While enjoying himself mightily in some Norwegian fiord or on some Scotch loch, his class was left without a teacher, and the members, after reading a chapter round, resolved they wouldn't come next Sunday afternoon. The business man off for his vacation makes careful arrangements for the conduct of office or factory while he is away. There ought not to be less care for the religious work in which we are engaged. Each worker in the church ought to make the effort to have his place well supplied during his absence. A new zest is added to the enjoyment of a holiday when we know that no duty at home is neglected while we are taking our pleasure.

Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by action.—*Carlyle.*

Faith is my waking life:
One sleeps indeed and dreams at intervals,
We know; but waking's the main point with us,
And my provision's for Life's waking part.
—*Browning.*

The sum of all is—Yes! my Doubt is great!
My faith's still greater!. —*Browning.*

"Our Losses and Gains."

The Conference on this subject at the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Association was about as ill-advised and inadequate a proceeding as could be well imagined. There was something ludicrous as well as pathetic about the whole affair. The idea of setting up two gentlemen to make out cases for and against our vitality, the one to play the part of devil's advocate, and the other to prophesy smooth things unto Israel, and this, before even the alleged facts and figures had been submitted to impartial consideration, was a course thoroughly foolish and inept, and bound to give satisfaction to nobody. If the matter is worth public debate then the proper method is first to sift and criticise the statistics by a competent and impartial committee, since no good can come of a debate founded on facts and figures, many of which are themselves in dispute. It is easy to make out that we are in a bad way and ready to die by dwelling only upon one class of facts: it is just as easy to show that we are on the high road to victory by dwelling only upon another class of facts. An essential preliminary to any fruitful discussion of our Losses and Gains is a thorough examination and a candid and authoritative statement of the facts. As it was, a mass of crude and undigested statistics was placed before the audience, the value of which they were quite incapable of appraising. Moreover, the chief reason given for our alleged failure is so wide of the mark as to be perfectly laughable. It is the spread of advanced views! Yes, and Tenterden steeple accounts for Goodwin sands! Certainly, if enquiry be made, it will appear that the churches among us which have any measure of success at all, are, as a rule, the churches of which advanced men are the ministers. Yet this is a paltry way of looking at the matter. It never seems to have occurred to the gentleman who made this charge to ask, "But are these advanced views *true?*" Has it come to this, that the test of truth is the measure of success with which its advocacy is attended?

The pathetic side of the affair is in the often-tried, in the long run always discredited, method of measuring a spiritual movement by columns of statistics. Whether a spiritual cause "gets on" or not, can rarely be tested by the yard measures and pint pots of our calculating tables. Again and again it needs to be enforced that popular applause and crowded churches and the favour of the public are often a kind of getting on which counts for nothing in the eyes of Heaven. There was One upon earth did not get on, save to Calvary, and months after he died an upper room of a private house in Jerusalem was big enough to hold the whole Christian Church.

It is not denied that the condition of our churches calls for grave, anxious, and serious thought. Things are not with us as they ought to be. We suffer many a mortifying defeat. We do not make that progress we so ardently look for. Too many of us are content with small things; we have given up hoping for great things, and great things only come to those who expect them. We have reason to mourn our lack of spiritual power. What success we have had, as the world speaks of success, has been slow and small, chequered and interrupted. At our annual gatherings it is the same tale of mediocrity, of a little advance here, a little retreat there, and we are thankful if we can just hold our own. Yet it is entirely false to say we have failed. No, we have *not* failed. Enough has been done to justify our enterprise, more than enough to set us singing a song of gratitude. The cause triumphs though the instruments fail. The decay of Calvinism; the downfall of Bibliolatry; the incoming of a more humane and reasonable theology, touching all the churches with a new spirit and changing the emphasis of all preaching; the work of the new Reformation, from which not even the most conservative and dogmatic churches can escape, may be pointed to as the fruit of our labours. We have had success enough to assure us that we have a truth to preach, a gospel to proclaim, a message to give in which there is light and leading for this troubled time. That our message might be ten times more effective than it is if we, its friends and disciples, were in deadly earnest, we must sadly confess. There is a reason for our want of progress about which the Conference was sadly silent. Perhaps it weighed too heavily on the heart for expression. What we suffer from is *a low temperature.* That condition of coldness and sluggishness has nothing to do with "views," advanced or otherwise. It is as compatible with Channing's views as it is with Estlin Carpenter's.

The deadness we have to fear may be found in our most orthodox churches, not less than in those at the other end of the pole. Our great and pressing want is not to rail at "views" that are not ours, but to *raise the temperature!* And he who can blow the dying embers into a useful flame is the man we supremely want.

Notices of New Books.

IMMORTAL LIFE. By Christopher J. Street, M.A. (*P. Green, 5, Essex Street, Strand*).—This is an admirable summary of the argument for immortality. It is addressed not so much to the scholar and student as to the ordinary reader, giving him in popular form the profoundest reasonings of philosophy on a future life. Mr. Street has done his work excellently well. His style has the merit of absolute clearness, while he carries on a difficult argument with comparative ease to the reader by the use of apt and taking illustrations. We especially commend the chapters on "Hindrances to Belief" and "The Potentiality of Man's Nature." The doctrine of Immortality has been attacked of late years from many quarters. Even some who retain their belief in God and Providence have felt they could no longer look forward with hope, and believe in another life behind the veil. Mr. Street's thoughtful and timely book should be put into the hands of all the doubters.

STORIES FROM THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS. By Marion Pritchard (*P. Green, 5, Essex Street, Strand*).—With all its scientific and historical inaccuracies the Book of Genesis remains one of the grandest and most suggestive in the whole Bible. Its character drawing is on the great, heroic scale of Homer, while its pictures of patriarchal life and its wealth of family stories make it for ever attractive both to young and old. Miss Pritchard has done well in bringing together a selection of these stories suitable for Sunday School purposes. Her frank acceptance of the results of Biblical criticism by no means diminishes her estimate of the moral and spiritual value of these old-world legends. Her point of view simply stated is that "When we realise that these legends embody, not facts about the Deity and his methods of working, but only the thoughts of men about him, all our difficulties vanish." Miss Pritchard's notes to the various stories for the use of teachers are likely to be very useful. We cannot say much for the "Parable picture" with which the book concludes. After the simple inevitableness, the grand drawing, and fine colouring of the Genesis stories, this concluding parable falls decidedly flat. It was not prudent to invite a comparison between ancient legends and modern parables. This, however, is a small matter, and we heartily recommend Miss Pritchard's book to all Sunday School teachers. But is not the price almost prohibitive for Sunday School possibilities? Why not publish a cheap edition?

There is no unbelief!
Whoever plants a seed beneath a sod
And waits to see it push away the clod,—
He trusts in God.
Whoever says, when clouds are in the sky—
"Be patient, heart; light breaketh by-and-bye,"
Trusts the Most High.
Whoever sees, 'neath winter's field of snow,
The silent harvest of the future grow,
God's power must know.
Whoever lies down on his couch to sleep,
Content to lock each sense in slumber deep,
Knows God will keep.
There is no unbelief!
And day by day and night unconsciously,
The heart lives by that faith the lips deny,
God knoweth why.
Be still! sad soul! lift thou no passionate cry,
But spread the desert of thy being bare
To the full searching of the All-seeing eye.
Wait! and through dark misgiving, blank despair,
God will come down in pity, and fill the dry
Dead place with light, and life, and vernal air.

—*J. C. Shairp.*

ALL God's developments have method. No matter how small a thing He sets Himself to do, He does it with a plan. There is not a blade of grass under your feet but He has a perfect method in its development. God would never clothe our fields and woods as He does if He were to work as we work, in haphazard dabs and dashes, here and there, persevering nowhere, finishing nothing, fragmentary patchwork.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The Nightingale.

The nightingale is the best of all our songsters. It comes to us about the middle of April, and it leaves us in August. Though a very fine singer, it is not a beautiful bird with brilliant plumage. Like the throstle, it is a plain, brown bird—brown, with a rich tint, however; on the under parts of the body the colour is greyish-white. It is a small creature, too; being seldom more than six inches long. The nightingale is not to be found throughout the whole of the country; it does not go very far north, nor yet very far west. People have tried hard to get it to make its home so far north as Yorkshire, but they have not been able to do this Neither does it go to Devonshire, much less to Cornwall. The true reason seems to be that the bird cannot find enough of its proper food in these parts of the country. The nightingale lives for the most part upon insects of various kinds. It dines with great delight upon small beetles and any sort of fleshy caterpillars—not hairy ones. The moist warm evenings are happy times for the nightingale, for then the caterpillars come swarming out to feed, and the birds come down upon them, and destroy them in great numbers Like the song thrush, the nightingale helps itself freely to fruit, when it hangs ripe on the trees and bushes in the autumn. The nightingale is faithful to the place of its birth, returning every year to build its nest there. It delights to settle in some quiet lane or thick hedge-row or copse. It builds its nest for the most part about a foot from the ground, but sometimes even close upon the ground in a hollow place, and it likes to dwell under the shade of leafy branches. It is a cunning builder, but not a very strong one. The nest is commonly formed of oak or beech leaves mixed with grasses; the lining is of fine dried grasses or hair, and sometimes of moss. It is very slightly constructed, unlike the strong water-tight nest of the song thrush. The nightingale breeds from the beginning of May till the middle of June. She lays from four to six eggs—mostly four, sometimes five, seldom six. The colour of the eggs is commonly a uniform olive-brown or green, varying in shade; sometimes it is a blue green, with spots of olive-brown all over; at other times it is a clear blue-green, with red spots. The nightingale is the finest singer of all our birds. Her notes are most thrilling and melodious. She pours them forth sometimes in the early morning, sometimes in the day, unless when the heat is very strong, but mostly in the evening twilight. As people pass along, they stop to listen with delight to the sweet tones of the charming singer. The nightingale sings her loudest and her longest songs in the week or two after she comes back in the spring. The females are then singing for the males, and they try hard to out-do each other. Once they have got their mates, they sing less fiercely. By the end of June, when they are hatching their young ones, their sweet tone changes into a rough croak. In autumn they do not sing, they only "wheet" and "kurr." Did you ever follow the song of the nightingale with care? It begins with something like this: "Wheet, wheet, kurr, k-u-u-r-r-r." After that it goes on—"Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet; jug, jug, jug, jug, jug, jug; swot, swot, swot, swrtly." As "sweet, sweet" is sung, the voice rises and falls, bending up and down in slow, plaintive tones. The "jug, jug" is quick, like the barking of an impatient dog.

Wishing.

Ring-ting! I wish I were a Primrose,
A bright yellow Primrose blowing in the spring!
The stooping boughs above me,
The wandering bee to love me,
The fern and moss to creep across,
And the Elm-tree for our King.

Nay—stay! I wish I were an Elm-tree,
A great lofty Elm-tree, with green leaves gay!
The winds would set them dancing,
The Sun and Moonshine glance in,
The Birds would house among the boughs,
And sweetly sing!

O—no! I wish I were a Robin,
A Robin or a little Wren, everywhere to go;
Through forest, field, or garden,
And ask no leave or pardon,
Till winter comes with icy thumbs
To ruffle up our wings!

Well—tell! Where should I fly to?
Where go to sleep in the dark wood or dell?
Before a day was over,
Home comes the rover,
For mother's kiss—sweeter this
Than any other thing.

W. ALLINGHAM.

What the Birds Say.

Do you ask what the birds say? The sparrow, the dove,
The linnet, and thrush say, "I love, and I love!"
In the winter they're silent, the wind is so strong;
What it says I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
And singing and loving—all come back together.
But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
That he sings, and he sings, and forever sings he,
"I love my Love, and my Love loves me."

S. T. COLERIDGE.

News from the Field.

BIRMINGHAM.—The United Sunday School Service at the Town Hall on Sunday afternoon, June 21st, was a most successful and interesting function. About 2000 children were present, and there was a goodly number of friends on the platform. With Mr. Perkins at the organ, and under the leadership of Mr. Herbert New, the singing went admirably in time and tune. Would it not be possible, however, by taking it in hand earlier, to form a select choir from the different schools, who should sing the harmonies of the tunes? The service was conducted by the Rev. T. Pipe, of Fazeley Street, and the address given by the Rev. L. P. Jacks, M.A. Mr. Jack's address rivetted the attention of the vast and difficult audience, and will long be remembered by all who were present. The children behaved remarkably well. We would suggest to the managers the possibility on another occasion of having a few plants and flowers on the orchestra. It is well to give to the meeting as much of a festive character as possible.

BIRMINGHAM. — *Newhall Hill Renovation.* — Our friends at Newhall Hill, under the able and inspiriting ministry of Mr. Charlesworth, have courageously set themselves to the task of renovating and improving their chapel. An apse is to be put out at the pulpit end, the organ is to be cleaned, enlarged, and removed from the gallery to the floor, and several minor alterations, adding greatly to the comfort and convenience of the congregation, are included in the scheme. An expenditure of £1000 is contemplated, towards which members of the church and schools have contributed £500. An appeal has been made to the general public for the remainder, and has met with a very generous response. We heartily congratulate Mr. Charlesworth and his friends on their successful venture. Newhall Hill is a thorough working church, and sets an example worthy of imitation by many of our congregations.

BANBURY (*Christchurch Chapel, Horse Fair*).—On Sunday, May 17th, the Sunday school anniversary services were held in connection with the above chapel, afternoon and evening. In the afternoon a number of the scholars repeated some select recitations, which were very carefully gone through by them. The minister (Rev. H. Hill) gave an address on "Using our gifts wisely and helpfully." At the evening service Mr. Hill gave a sermon on "True and false sacrifices," based on 2nd Book of Samuel xxiv. 24—"Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." The choir and scholars sang a number of appropriate pieces of music at both services in an excellent manner, under the able guidance of the organist (Mr. F. T. C. Webb). A nice little decoration of flowers on the reading desk and on a table below, made the place look quite bright and cheerful for the occasion. The collections for the day were in advance of last year.

CHESTER.—Rev. J. K. Montgomery, for thirty-six years the minister of the ancient Presbyterian Chapel in Chester, locally known as the Matthew Henry Chapel, since it was built by this celebrated divine, but now the Unitarian place of worship, has just retired from the ministry at the venerable age of 80, and after fifty years of professional activity. Rev. H. D. Roberts, from the Home Missionary College, Manchester, has been appointed to fill the vacancy, and will be inducted on July 5th.

SHREWSBURY.—At a meeting in St. John's Hill Wesleyan Chapel, to inaugurate formally the Shrewsbury and District Evangelical Free Church Council, Mr. E. J. Piper asked what was the meaning of the term "evangelical." Were not all Free Churches evangelical? The Rev. T. Hoskings said "Unitarians are not." Mr. Piper: "In what sense are they not?" The Chairman said he thought the word was understood in the sense it was used in the name. Mr. Piper: "Understood by you, but certainly not by me, and that is the reason why I ask." The Chairman said the name pretty clearly described those churches which accepted Jesus Christ. The proposed constitution had been drawn up on the lines of the National Free Church Council, in order that they might associate themselves with that Council. The Rev. W. E. Jenkins said he was not ashamed to define the term as designating those who accepted the divinity of Jesus Christ, and looked upon him as the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind. The Rev. W. Thomson suggested the "deity" instead of "divinity." The name was then adopted. Subsequently Mr. Piper moved that the word "evangelical" be left out wherever it appeared in the rules, name, etc. He said he did so because the object of introducing it was to exclude Unitarians from any part in the management or membership. If that was the case he could only say he was sure they were making a great mistake, for in the past their Unitarian friends had often not been afraid to stand in the teeth of severe opposition, and even when some of their own evangelical friends had been wanting in the discharge of their duty their Unitarian friends had not been afraid to hold up the standard. He thought Nonconformity in Shrewsbury was too weak and too feeble to exclude from its organisation those who might not happen to think on all fours with the Evangelical Churches. Unitarians had as much right as he had to be included; he had no right to say to them that he was right and they were wrong. He thought they were making a very great mistake in trying to form that association at all. After a warm discussion Mr. Piper's motion was negatived.

WHITCHURCH.—The monthly ministers' meeting was held at Whitchurch on Wednesday, June 16th. A paper on "The Idea of God," by the Rev. T. Gascoigne, B.A. (who was kept away by illness), was read for him by the Rev. George E. Evans. Luncheon was served in the Club Room. In the afternoon a pleasant excursion was made to Philip Henry's Church at Whitewell, when the ministers were entertained at tea by the Rector, the Rev. J. Jacob. Mr. Jacob conducted the party over Whitewell, and his kindness and hospitality were much appreciated. On returning to Whitchurch a short service was held, when Mr. Wood gave an address suggested by the reminiscences of Philip Henry which had marked the day. Although the attendance of ministers was small, it was a most successful and enjoyable gathering.